Alternation 2019 Special Edition: Call for submissions

Curriculum without Borders:
Transdisciplinary, interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary teaching in higher education

Editors: Rubby Dhunpath and Nyna Amin

Whilst scholars have theorised and practiced higher education curriculum without disturbing its insidious interior and outcomes, the students (those who have been accused of being uncritical thinkers) have detected its weaknesses and limitations and highlighted these through protest actions that have shaken the foundations of disciplines and the material foundations of higher education infrastructures.

The recent publication, “Disrupting Higher Education Curriculum: Undoing Cognitive Damage” (Samuel, Dhunpath & Amin, 2016) and the decolonise the curriculum fallist movement, provide a spectrum of ideas on how cognitive damage is activated through the processes of formal and informal learning underpinned by the curriculum choices we make. Undoing cognitive damage, as captured in the writings of authors in that volume such as Gayatri Spivak, Thabo Msibi, William Pinar and others point to curriculum work as a complicated and time-consuming endeavour: it requires unmasking the hidden assumptions, stereotypical beliefs, imported worldviews, inappropriate and irrelevant content, and most importantly, discovering the ways in which curriculum designers and implementers are complicit actors of cognitive damage.

A curriculum border Amin (2016) writes, restricts and circumscribes “with prescribed objectives, content, practices, activities and assessments for narrow regulatory purposes (passing a module or acquiring a qualification). Power, vested stakes and hegemony are exercised in higher education through curricula design and choices, which are imposed on students. It is often an inward looking (at the prescribed content, objectives and outcomes), decontextualised, ahistorical and perhaps, irrelevant preparation for post institutional intents”. A curriculum without borders approach, she argues, is an opportunity to redefine a branch of learning by opening its perimeters to disruptive, contradictory and complementary ideas and thoughts. It is at the intersection of disciplines that creative leaps can be made; it is the cross pollination of disciplines that generate new concepts, enabling revision and the production of relevant and appropriate knowledge. Curriculum, we know “is the manifestation of the power distribution in society” (Lau, 2001, p. 29). Moving beyond the boundaries of disciplines provides the freedom for epistemic disobedience and resistance.

For the editors of this special edition, without borders is a useful trope for contemporary curriculum work aligned to revisionist endeavours, expanding possibilities, introspecting existing practices and conjuring future curricula interpretations and implementation. This special edition invites submissions on disruptive shifts to re/vitalise higher education curricula. It implores critical interrogation into whether already enacted alternative curriculum interventions have indeed assisted
to undo cognitive damage in higher education. Have the curriculum disruptions enabled re-defining who we as academic producers of knowledge are and who we want to become as knowledge activators in and through our curricula?

We call on curriculum theorists, analysts, practitioners and all who have been immersed in curriculum work to share their explorations, experiences, experiments, case studies, theorisations and constructive methodologies. We are keen to gain insights into successful and not so successful adventures in curriculum change and transformation, which provide the philosophical and pragmatic terrain to re-imagine and posit future directions in higher education curricula.

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**Email**: utloreviews@ukzn.ac.za  
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**Editors:**  
1. Dr Rubby Dhunpath Dhunpath@ukzn.ac.za; Tel: 031-260 2622  
2. Prof Nyna Amin: Amin@ukzn.ac.za Tel. 031-260 7255

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